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# THE EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION

## 1916-1919

### NOTE

IT proved impossible during the period of the war, with the greatly reduced personnel of the staff of the Expedition and the manifold requirements of the work itself, to render reports covering all sides of the Expedition's activities. The last report to appear was that on the Museum's work at Thebes during the season of 1916-17, issued as a Supplement to the *BULLETIN* for March, 1918. The present report takes up the story at that point and covers the major part of the work accomplished down to the end of the season of 1918-19. Further reports soon to be published will describe the later phases of the excavations,

including the season of 1919-20 just concluded.

In the present report are included:

1. Excavations conducted on the Pyramid of Sesostri I and its adjacent cemetery, at Lisht, during a part of each of the two seasons of 1916-17 and 1917-18, by Ambrose Lansing.
2. Excavations in the Asasif, at Thebes, in 1918-19, by Ambrose Lansing.
3. The work of the Robb de Peyster Tytus Memorial Fund, in the investigation and publication of Theban tombs, by Norman de Garis Davies.
4. Investigations in the history of the Monasteries of the Wadi Natrun, by Hugh G. Evelyn White. A. M. L.

### I. EXCAVATIONS ON THE PYRAMID OF SESOSTRI I AT LISHT SEASONS OF 1916-17 AND 1917-18

FOLLOWING the outbreak of the war in 1914, the work of the Museum's Egyptian Expedition upon the pyramids of Amenemhat I and Sesostri I at Lisht was suspended for the time being, in view of more urgent reasons for continuing the excavations on its concessions at Thebes. Eventually, however, during a part of the two seasons from 1916 to 1918, the excavations at Lisht were resumed, and they form the subject of the present article. The investigations of both seasons were confined to the pyramid of Sesostri I alone and the cemetery surrounding it, and were in continuation of the program of earlier years upon that part of the site at Lisht.

In the season of 1916-17, from October to January, the clearing of the area immediately south of the pyramid-temple was undertaken, as far as the outer enclosure-wall; and in the following season, in March

and April of 1918, the excavations were continued still farther toward the west, aiming at the clearance of the inner enclosure-wall on the south side of the pyramid, and the exposure of the southeast corner of the pyramid itself (fig. 1).

The project of clearing the large area south of the temple demanded the selection of a new place for getting rid of the debris covering the ground to be exposed. While the railway was being laid above, the rest of the workmen were set to testing the "khor" or gully chosen as a dumping spot in the southern slope of the plateau, that no risk might be incurred of burying irretrievably antiquities which might exist there. That such precautions must invariably be taken was proved in the first hour's work by the exposure of the remains of a brick mastaba in the khor. Little, to be sure, remained of the super-

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structure, for the rains flowing down this gully from the plateau above had washed the rock nearly bare of the brickwork, but the mouths of two shafts were soon disclosed, and one of these proved to be unplundered.

This one, situated between the superstructure and its enclosure-wall, was not

small, the coffin almost entirely filling it. On this had been placed a representation of the funerary barque—one of the stock items of burial equipment in the XII dynasty. But the wood of which it had been made was not of sufficiently good quality to withstand the action of time and humidity, and it had collapsed and

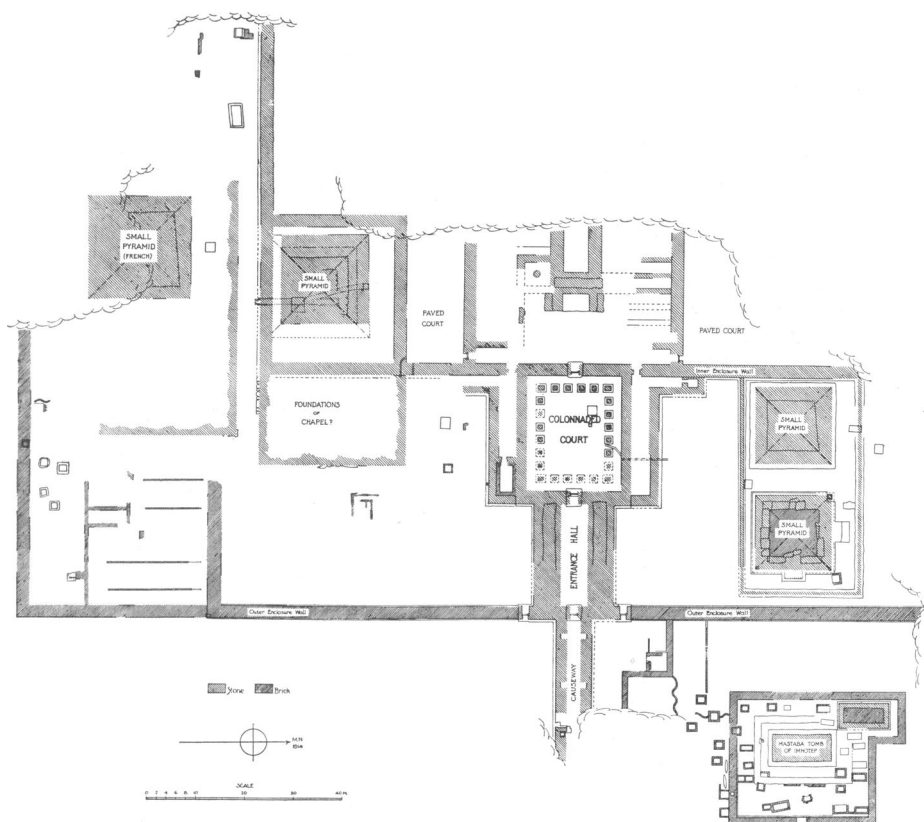


FIG. 1. PLAN OF EXCAVATIONS OF 1916-18 AT THE PYRAMID OF SESOSTRIS I TOGETHER WITH PREVIOUS EXCAVATIONS

the main shaft of the tomb. It penetrated to a sufficient depth, however, to have reached the level now found to be affected by moisture from the constantly rising bed of the Nile—as is the case in many of the tomb shafts of the Lisht cemeteries. This was evident, when the blocking in the entrance to the burial-chamber had been removed, from the condition of the wooden objects found there. The chamber was

slipped to the ground, a shapeless heap. Two small wooden statuettes were in not much better condition, being warped and split, but the preservation of a third left nothing to be desired.

The coffin was of the ordinary XII dynasty type with the usual inscriptions on the lid and sides, which showed the individual to have been an official of the necropolis: "The Overseer of the Place

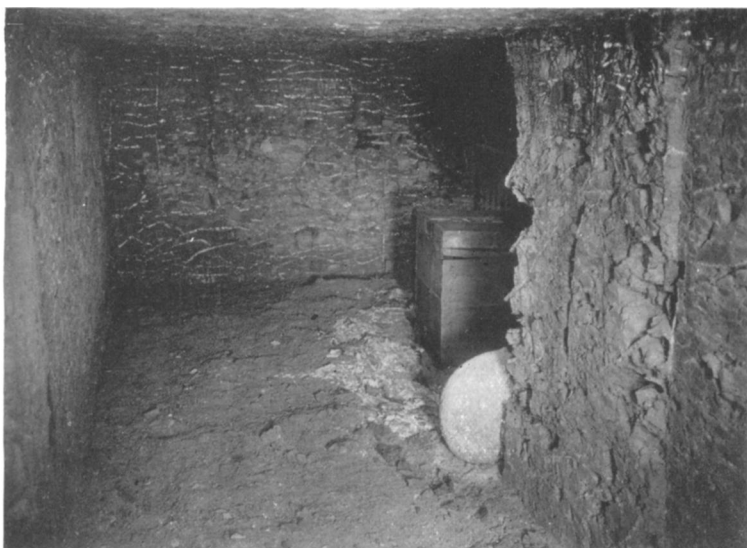


FIG. 2. VIEW INTO ROCK-CUT BURIAL CHAMBER AFTER REMOVAL OF BLOCKING IN DOORWAY

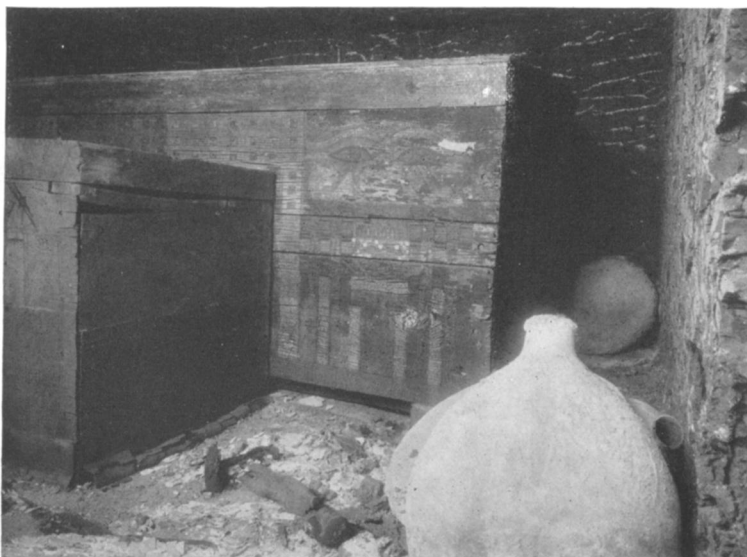


FIG. 3. THE SAME BURIAL CHAMBER SHOWING COFFIN, CANOPIC CHEST, AND OTHER FURNITURE IN SITU

of Truth, Khety." The interior of the coffin proved to be of considerable interest. The sides and lower surface of the lid were decorated with representations of funerary equipment and lists of offerings. The burial was well wrapped and padded, the cloth being remarkably well preserved, and was decorated with a collar of greenish blue beads about the neck, and bracelets and anklets of similar work.

In connection with this burial, a similar tomb may be described. This shaft had been commenced in 1914,<sup>1</sup> when several burials were found in chambers of an upper tier. In this season of 1916-17 the clearing of the shaft was continued still farther to its full depth, where two additional chambers were found. They were both intact, the northern one containing a mass of coffins which proved on examination to present nothing of unusual interest. The southern chamber of this tomb, however, contained two burials of people of somewhat greater importance (figs. 2 and 3). Here, a model of a funerary barque had been provided, as in the case of the burial described previously, and in addition a model of a farmyard scene. But here, likewise, the humidity had almost completely destroyed these fragile objects, as well as a wooden statuette which lay beside them. A Canopic chest, which stood beside the coffin, contained the remains of Canopic jars of wood, covered with stucco, which had suffered in a similar way from the conditions to which they had been subjected. The coffins bore the interesting false-door decoration of the period, and in each case there had been laid near the head of the person a biscuit of dark colored bread. No articles of personal adornment, however, were present.

To resume the description of our main program of work, when the khor had been cleared to the extent required by the dump, the excavations on the plateau above were commenced. Two enclosure-walls, an exterior wall of mud brick and an interior wall of fine limestone decorated with sculptured panels, girdle the pyramid of Sesostri I. To the east of the pyramid

the brick wall meets the head of the causeway at its entrance into the temple. The limestone wall joins the temple at the west end of the latter's open central hall, forming the division between the more public portion of the temple and the storerooms and sanctuary in its western end (fig. 1).

Between these two walls, on the north side of the temple, two small pyramids had been excavated during the season of 1913-14, and it was hoped that similar tombs would be found in the corresponding area to the south, though the state of the ground here did not give much promise in this regard. On clearance it was discovered that there were only two shafts in this area, and these were both plundered. The masonry somewhat to the south of these suggests a mastaba, but consists of foundation stones only, which do not permit of determining the nature of the building exactly.

The exterior brick enclosure-wall extends southward from the head of the causeway for a distance of 105 meters before it turns the corner to take its westward course. But a point 65.50 meters from the causeway was the corner where it was originally constructed, or at least in the plan as originally laid out. Here we have the same architect's corner-stone as in the corner of the finished enclosure; the traces of the wall running west are clearly seen. The change of plan must have been due to the fact that the small pyramid noted by M.M. Gautier and Jéquier<sup>1</sup> (designated "French pyramid" in plan, fig. 1) was built after the laying out of the original plan. The south wall of the exterior enclosure was then doubtless shifted to include this pyramid within the royal precinct. The enclosure-wall, as it approaches its southeastern corner, passes over an earlier wall, somewhat smaller and presumably the girdle wall of a mastaba to the east. On the south it originally covered the mouth of a shaft. Both facts give added evidence that the great girdle wall was not built in its present extent until after the cemetery had been in use for a certain time.

Between the discarded wall and this

<sup>1</sup>Supplement to BULLETIN for February, 1915, p. 20.

<sup>1</sup>Gautier and Jéquier, *Fouilles de Licht, Le Caire*, 1902, pp. 46-49.

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south wall—that is to say, in the southeast corner of the enclosure—traces of a building came to light. They are too scant, however, to give much idea of the nature of the structure which was situated here, for the denudation in this part of the pyramid area is extreme. Very small chips of colored limestone relief show that the building had been of considerable importance,

one of these shafts. Here, too, occurred two limestone blocks from the casing of a pyramid furnished with a curiously elaborate interlocking system. This may have come from one of the small pyramids near the main one, or may indicate that a small pyramid was situated here also.

In the southeast corner of the inner limestone enclosures there is a small pyramid

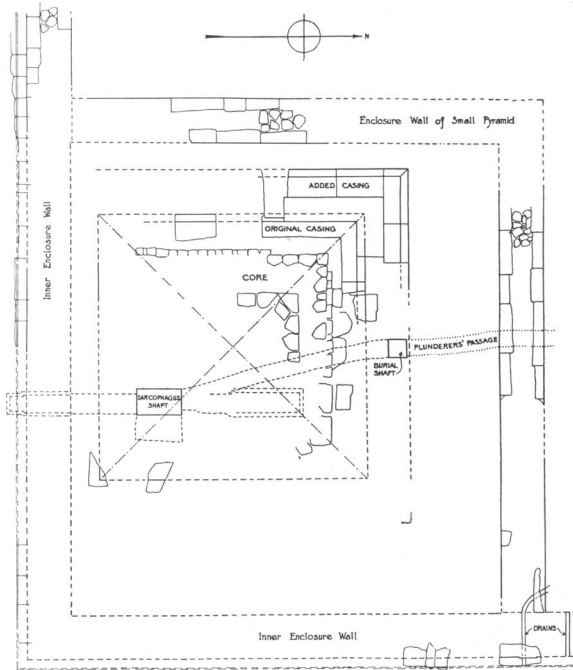


FIG. 4. PLAN OF SMALL PYRAMID WITHIN  
LIMESTONE ENCLOSURE-WALL

but only one large block remains in position. This is a foundation and paving stone containing in its upper surface a drain at a point where a wall passed over it. The dimensions of the wall as indicated by the lines on this block show that the building must have been of a light character, perhaps a small chapel in front of one of the tombs to the west. Several shafts were found here and excavated, one descending to a depth below the modern water level, like some of the shafts of the North Pyramid cemetery, but all had been plundered. The lower half of a much battered seated statue in slate was found near the mouth of

(fig. 4) which proved to be the most interesting discovery of the two seasons. Not, however, because of any finds in the burial chambers, for, after clearing with rising hopes the intact "sarcophagus" shaft in the body of the pyramid, it was found that the plunderers had obtained access to the subterranean rooms by the "burial" shaft to the north.

A fiction occasionally crops up to the effect that the pharaohs used to build their pyramids by accretion; that is to say, that at intervals they added new layers to the tombs which they were preparing for themselves, thus increasing their size and

height, and that in this manner the length of a king's reign can be roughly determined; somewhat on the analogy of the number of rings appearing in the cross section of the trunk of a tree. That this practice was not followed has of course been proved long ago; but curiously enough the remains of the small pyramid at present under discussion do exhibit a true case of accretion.

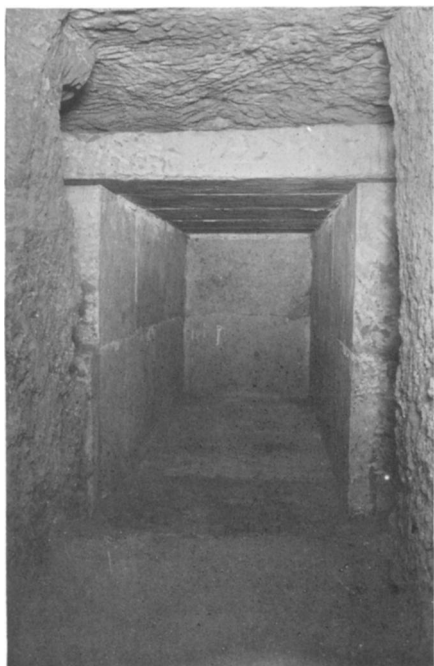


FIG. 5. A BURIAL CHAMBER OF THE SMALL PYRAMID

It is quite evident that in the original plan of the pyramid and temple of Sesostris I the door in the south side of the back part of the temple (cf. fig. 1) looked upon an open court bounded on the right by the pyramid itself, on the left by the inner enclosure-wall, and having in its southern end the small pyramid of which we are speaking. This was originally nearly sixteen meters square and of about the same height. Later, probably after the interment had been made,<sup>1</sup> the small pyramid

<sup>1</sup>If the tomb ever contained a burial. Though the great shaft under the base of the pyramid

was increased in size and height, and a wall was built to the north and west of it, abutting against the main enclosure-wall, thus surrounding it in an enclosure of its own. The state of preservation of this area is unfortunately not of the best; especially so since the solution of a most interesting problem is left to speculation.

As will be seen from the plan, the original and secondary casings of the small pyramid are preserved only on the north and west sides, at their common corner; for here the great mass of debris from the disintegration of the main pyramid prevented the plundering quarrymen of a later period from removing the fine limestone of the casing to the level of the pavement. When the reconstruction occurred, the pavement of the area within the small enclosure was raised thirty-five centimeters, the added casing being laid upon this (fig. 6). The raised pavement also exists to its full height at the northeast corner of the pyramid, and its weathering here would indicate that the additional casing was present on the east side also.

On the south side of the pyramid, however, the space between the original pyramid and the great enclosure-wall is not wide enough to permit of the second casing having been laid there, unless indeed the outer casing never extended to the level of the pavement but was built against the enclosure-wall—a mode of construction which it is hard to believe possible of the architect of this king.

If, on the other hand, we take it that the pyramid was left with the original casing alone on the south side, we must regard the pavement indication at the northeast corner insufficient to determine an added casing on the east side; for if we increase the pyramid on three sides and not on the fourth the result is no longer a true pyramid, since the four sides of the base are not of equal length. A pyramid with added casing on two sides is peculiar enough.

was evidently cut with the intention of letting down a sarcophagus, and the two chambers below were lined with fine limestone to receive sarcophagi, none existed, and no traces of wooden coffins or anything which plunderers might have left there were discovered.



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There is unfortunately no evidence to show how the juncture of the new casing and the old was effected—whether the original corner-stones were removed to bond the new ones in with the old, or whether the second casing was merely built flush with the first.

The second casing served the double purpose of increasing the size of this small pyramid and giving added protection to the burial, for the addition rests over the “burial” shaft of the tomb.<sup>1</sup> It was of no avail, however, for entrance had been

had been removed by later quarrymen to such an extent that a corner of it was visible when the pyramid was cleared. Of great depth, the shaft had been bridged by two enormous blocks of limestone, at a point about half way down. Above these it was filled with stone and sand. The part below remained as a high-roofed chamber. From this, two passages lead north and south to the burial chambers lined with limestone (fig. 5) mentioned above, and a third passage, sloping upward, connects with the “burial” shaft.



FIG. 6. ADDED CASING (AB) ON THE WEST SIDE OF THE SMALL PYRAMID. VIEW NORTHWARD

effected from the court mentioned above, north of the wall enclosing the small pyramid. Here there was less pavement to cut through, and a passage was forced to the burial shaft through the bed rock, which is a friable conglomerate in this stratum.

The “sarcophagus” shaft near the southeast corner of the pyramid had originally been covered by the core, but this

<sup>1</sup>Cf. a similar example of “sarcophagus” and “burial” shaft in a mastaba of the North Pyramid Cemetery at Lisht. BULLETIN of the Metropolitan Museum, October, 1914, pp. 214-16.

As already noted, the brick girdle wall was enlarged to include within its limits the small pyramid (“French pyramid”) which lies outside and south of the limestone enclosure-wall. This pyramid was investigated in 1895 by MM. Jéquier and Gautier who discovered it and cleared the plundered burial chamber. The present excavations in this region are not yet completed, but enough has been done to determine exactly the dimensions of the pyramid, which is 21.10 meters square. It is unusual in having had a stela placed in the center of its north side. At this point a section of the casing is built vertical

to a height above the first course, and against this projecting section the stela had been set.

A few foundation blocks situated east of this pyramid are all that remains of what was doubtless a funerary chapel attached to this tomb. Presumably the whole was enclosed by a limestone wall, of which



FIG. 7. SLEDGE FOUND IN THE DEPOSIT HOLE

however only one trace exists—just north of the burial shaft.

It may here be remarked that the foundation remains mentioned above as lying south of the central hall of the temple may be the traces of another chapel attached to the pyramid with two casings.

The great limestone enclosure-wall separates these two small pyramids. Between them it is not preserved above pavement level, but beyond, toward the west, the

first course remains standing. This wall had been decorated at intervals of five meters with panels on both sides in fine relief. On these were represented a Nile god with offerings above which was sculptured a most elaborate door, and then the name of Sesostris I; the whole topped by the sacred falcon crowned with the double crown of Egypt. The head and crown of the falcon, occurring as they do on the semicircular coping stone, are in such high relief as to be almost, for Egyptian art, in the round.

It will be remembered that in the season of 1913-14 two fine wooden statuettes of Sesostris I were discovered in a brick wall enclosing a mastaba, and that just outside of the wall a boat and the remains of a second were found.<sup>1</sup> These were probably to be considered as objects which were carried in the funeral procession of the noble near whose tomb they were found. Since they were not actually a part of the funerary equipment, they were not placed in the burial-chamber itself but were deposited outside.

In connection with the Sesostris pyramid, there came to light, in the course of our excavations along its southern side, what are undoubtedly deposits similar to those mentioned. Just outside the limestone enclosure-wall, about three and a half meters to the south of it, two depressions were disclosed which at first appeared to be the mouths of shafts. The eastern one was found to be entirely plundered. Only a few small pieces of cedar wood had been left, and these are not enough to give a clue to the nature of the object which had been placed there.

But the western deposit proved to be intact. It was filled with the red sand which forms the stratum of the rock on the surface here, and at a depth of a little over a meter there was a rough flooring of brick which had been placed directly on the deposit. This proved to be a well-built sledge of cedar wood. Readers will doubtless remember the tomb pictures which represent the statue of the deceased being hauled to the tomb on a sledge. It is

<sup>1</sup>See Supplement to BULLETIN for February, 1915, pp. 10-12.

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very likely that in this object (fig. 7) we have the actual sledge on which was loaded a statue of Sesostri I which was conveyed to the pyramid in his funeral procession nearly four thousand years ago.

It is hoped that the complete clearance of

the limestone enclosure-wall to the south of the pyramid may bring to light further material of this type, for here the present surface of the ground shows that it has scarcely been disturbed in modern times.

AMBROSE LANSING.

## II. EXCAVATIONS IN THE ASASIF AT THEBES

### SEASON OF 1918-19

DURING the season of 1918-19 the field work of the Museum's Egyptian Expedition was confined to its Theban concession in the Deir el Bahri district. This site, called locally the Asasif, which will eventually be completely cleared, consists of a long stretch of desert in the valley which runs up from the cultivation to the two temples of Deir el Bahri. It is bounded on the north by the causeway of the Hatshepsut temple, and on the south by the hill on which the house of the Expedition is situated. Hitherto the major excavations of the Expedition have been confined to the lower end of the site near the cultivation edge,<sup>1</sup> the problem of getting rid of the debris having necessitated a program of work whereby the debris of each succeeding year's work is dumped on the area cleared the year before; for in the higher portions of the Asasif the piles of chip are so deep and the tombs so close together that it is almost impossible to clear any part of it without irretrievably burying an adjoining area.

To the north of the Hatshepsut causeway, however, there is a large depression which is the original bed of the valley, before her causeway buildings and those of the Mentuhoteps were undertaken. This depression lies beyond the limits of the concession, but permission was obtained from the Service des Antiquités to use it for a dumping ground, and thus it has become possible at the present time to commence the heavy clearing which is necessary in the Upper Asasif (fig. 2).

A certain amount of preliminary excavation

was necessary in this depression, but such tombs as existed were found to be almost completely plundered. They were mainly of the Middle Kingdom, being the lowest row of the tombs of that date, which looked down from the steep hillside on to the Mentuhotep temple causeway. The most interesting object found in them was a bow with arrows wrapped in a cloth. These tombs had also been used for later burials, and smaller tombs had been cut in the rock during the Late-Dynastic Period. Lying loose in the debris were found two ushabti figures of Mentemhat (fig. 1) whose tomb will be mentioned shortly. The depression having been completely cleared, and thus prepared to receive the debris, a railway line was completed on January 10, 1919, running to this spot from the main excavations.

In the middle of the valley about a quarter of a mile east of the two temples of Deir el Bahri is a group of three rock-cut tombs dating from the Saite Period, whose superstructures consist of brick enclosure-walls with high entrance pylons. The largest of these is that of Mentemhat, whose enormous brick arch is one of the familiar objects of the Theban landscape. About these tombs and to the east of them are great heaps of limestone chip, for the nobles who prepared tombs for themselves cared very little for the condition of the tombs neighboring the sites which they had chosen, and allowed their workmen to get rid of the stone cut out of the rock as best pleased them. The result was of course that the stone and chip were carried as small a distance as possible and were usually thrown on adjoining tombs.

It seemed probable that an area just east

<sup>1</sup>See BULLETIN of the Metropolitan Museum for January, 1914, and Supplement to the BULLETIN for May, 1917.